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Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: the Millennium Development Goals and synergies with other United Nations disability instruments

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 60/131 requesting the Secretary-General to submit a report on the global implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, with respect to overall efforts being made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, also including possible options to improve the complementarity and synergy in the implementation of the World Programme of Action and other United Nations disability mechanisms and instruments, taking into account the strengths and main elements of the World Programme of Action as well as its important role in providing policy guidelines for States. The report focuses on activities that have occurred since the previous progress report, submitted to the sixtieth session of the Assembly, and is based on the activities and suggestions of 16 Governments and of seven agencies, programmes and funds and four regional commissions of the United Nations.

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I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/131, the present report presents an overview of the integration of disability issues in development efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the first and second goals; an overview of the three main United Nations disability mechanisms and instruments, namely the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons,[1] the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities,[2] and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;[3] and a review of options to improve the complementarity and synergy in the implementation of the three disability instruments. It will conclude with a set of recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.

2. Sixteen Member States contributed to the report: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, the Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia. Contributions were also received from seven specialized agencies, programmes and funds: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank; and from four regional commissions: the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

3. The report is organized as follows: section II presents a brief overview of the current international instruments on disability, followed by section III which presents a more detailed analysis of how those mechanisms and instruments can relate to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Each of the eight goals will be reviewed for its impact on, and relevance to, persons with disabilities. In section IV of the report, some policy options are provided to improve the complementarity of the main instruments.

II. Overview of United Nations disability mechanisms and instruments

4. The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in December 1982, provided the international community with a comprehensive policy framework to enhance the prevention of disability, the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and the realization of the goals of full participation of persons with disabilities in social life and national development and of equality. The World Programme of Action represented a significant move away from the traditional approach that focused solely on rehabilitation in response to the

[1] Resolution 37/52 of 3 December 1982, by which the Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action as set forth in A/37/351/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, annex, section VIII, recommendation I (IV).

[2] Resolution 48/96, annex.

[3] Resolution 61/106, annex I.

needs of persons with disabilities. It was the first international instrument to attempt to articulate both a developmental and a rights-based approach to disability. The Secretary-General reports to the General Assembly on the implementation of the World Programme of Action. The World Programme of Action establishes that the monitoring and evaluation of progress made be carried out at periodic intervals at the international and regional levels, as well as at the national level. Evaluation indicators of the World Programme of Action should be selected by the United Nations in consultation with Member States and relevant United Nations agencies and other organizations.[4]

5. The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the Assembly in December 1993, drew on the experience gained during the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992). The Standard Rules comprise 22 rules that address all aspects of life of persons with disabilities and provide for a continuum of interventions that are critical to the equalization of opportunities for all persons with disabilities. Since their adoption, the Standard Rules have played a significant role in informing the elaboration of national policies and practices on disability throughout the world. It is widely agreed that the application of the principles expressed in the Standard Rules has greatly contributed to the dissemination of best practices on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development prepares a yearly report on the Standard Rules. Upon renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur in 2005, the Commission on Social Development requested the Special Rapporteur to submit to the Commission a report on the monitoring of implementation of the Standard Rules on an annual basis instead of every two years as previously mandated.[5] The Assembly has yet to decide on the proposed supplement to the Standard Rules, contained in the annex to the third monitoring report of the Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development (see E/CN.5/2002/4).

6. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the General Assembly in December 2006, was developed as a result of the recognition that, despite gains since the adoption of the World Programme of Action and the Standard Rules, much work still remained to be done to effectively promote full and effective participation of and opportunities for persons with disabilities in economic, social, cultural and political life (see General Assembly resolution 56/168). The Convention opened for signature on 30 March 2007. As of 12 July 2007, a total of 100 States had signed the Convention, and 55 had signed the Optional Protocol.[6] One State, Jamaica, had ratified the Convention. States Parties will submit reports on the implementation of the Convention to the Committee on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. Article 38 of the Convention establishes that the Committee may invite the specialized agencies and other competent bodies to provide expert advice on implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their respective mandates.

7. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities aims at promoting further the inclusive approach to development which was elaborated in the World Programme of Action, and re-emphasized by the World Summit for Social

[4] See A/37/351/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, annex, section VIII, recommendation I (IV), para. 194.

[5] See Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/9.

[6] Resolution 61/106, annex II.

Development in Copenhagen and of bringing disability issues into the mainstream of the development agenda. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the only one of the three instruments that is legally binding for its States Parties.

III. Integration of disability issues in development efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals

8. Many Member States and United Nations agencies, programmes and funds as well as the regional commissions have committed themselves to programmes and policies aimed at ensuring the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities, a sign of the growing recognition that the Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved without the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in all development efforts and without making existing projects accessible to persons with disabilities.

9. The present report focuses primarily on the first two goals, namely eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education as, in general, initiatives pertaining to disability and the other goals are scanty or at an early stage of implementation. The first two goals are fundamental and prominent in the lives of many persons with disabilities. There is a strong bidirectional link between poverty and disability: poverty may cause disability through, among others, precarious living conditions, inadequate health care and malnutrition, while disability causes poverty when persons with disabilities are excluded from full participation in the social and economic activities of their communities. A strong link also exists between disability and education. Estimates indicate that approximately 40 million of the 115 million children out of school have a disability and that the majority of children with disabilities worldwide are not in school. Thus, in order to attain the goal of universal primary education, all children must be included.

10. Emergency situations arising from natural disasters and conflict may provide particular challenges for persons with disabilities in accessing the required humanitarian assistance. Even natural seasonal variations such as monsoons and rainy seasons can cause pathways that are accessible during dry seasons to become impassable for persons with limited mobility and users of wheelchairs. In the case of conflict situations, there is a need for attention to the role of arms in creating disability.

Mainstreaming

11. Promoting the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities into the wider development agenda is an important element in attaining recognition of those rights. There is a general dearth of knowledge of disability issues among the development partners, evidenced by the absence of a disability perspective in most development endeavours. The World Programme of Action was adopted 25 years ago, promoting the link between disability and development. Despite its important contributions, implementation of its tenets has been lagging. Evidence of this can be seen in information from the World Bank that reports that during the fiscal years 2002-2006 only 5 per cent of new lending commitments had a disability component. This points to a strong need for awareness-raising, the formulation of guidelines,

increased budget allocations for disability issues and the capacity-building of all relevant development actors. The implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities intends to address those needs, building on the strengths and successes achieved by the World Programme of Action and the Standard Rules. The expertise of United Nations agencies and programmes is also a potentially valuable resource to develop and promote the mainstreaming of disability issues across all sectors. It was also suggested that mainstreaming efforts should still allow for the vital role of disability-specific initiatives in speeding up the process.

12. It is now widely recognized that gender and HIV/AIDS are cross-cutting themes to be taken into account in all endeavours. There is an opportunity to learn from those examples when promoting disability as a similarly cross-cutting theme and to develop programming that effectively addresses all such issues.

Actions at the national level

13. One of the ways in which several countries are dealing with disability at a national level is the establishment of a national disability focal point office that guides the inclusion of disability across sectors, staffed at least in part by persons with disabilities. Such offices allow the centralization of all disability-related knowledge and programmes, while at the same time employing staff dedicated to promoting and supporting the implementation of mainstreaming across public, private and non-governmental sectors. National offices can also be well placed to oversee the implementation of the tenets of the World Programme of Action and the obligations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, within the framework of a nationally formulated strategic action plan. Furthermore, the offices may be able to liaise with international donors to ensure that development activities respect the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. Specific disability focal point offices are generally more effective when they are given the task of coordinating the mainstreaming of disability issues across the public administration and are provided with the authority and resources to do so.

14. Many countries have established a government commission for persons with disabilities. The commissions are frequently responsible for monitoring the application of existing disability-related legislation, proposing recommended amendments to the Government, overseeing the implementation of the national strategy and cooperating with civil society organizations working in the field of disability. They also make recommendations on ways to improve existing activities aimed at the protection of persons with disabilities and the realization of their rights, and arrange for the translation of all relevant international documents in text, audio format or Braille.

15. The marginalization of persons with disabilities still arises in large part from biased attitudes and a lack of awareness and knowledge rather than from a lack of economic resources alone, yet persons with disabilities remain among the most vulnerable and marginalized. Though some interventions require significant financial investment, there are several proactive measures that do not entail a large investment of monetary resources but are very effective. Thus, well-planned policy and programmatic changes could result in substantial benefits, even without large financial investments. Key areas for policy change include employment, social security systems and anti-discrimination legislation. Awareness-raising and training programmes for the general public are examples of interventions that may be

pursued with a low level of monetary investment. Another low-cost possibility for raising awareness is to give recognition to socially responsible companies that offer products and services for, and inclusive of, persons with disabilities. Locally manufactured adaptive equipment can create low-cost options that enhance the integration of persons with disabilities into the community. Public transportation systems can be made more accessible if transport operators call out the names of stops, thus allowing blind persons more independence. The production of emergency plans and important national and international documents can be produced in Braille without great expense. Consultation with local organizations of persons with disabilities may be helpful in identifying relevant low-cost options that increase the inclusiveness of specific environments.

"Nothing about us without us"

16. Support needs to be given to the collective voice and capacity of persons with disabilities in order to channel their legitimate claims into planning and decision-making processes. Relevant organizations of persons with disabilities may be important potential partners in policymaking and programme implementation at the local, national, regional and international levels. Supporting local non-governmental organizations that then provide services for persons with disabilities, and providing them with technical assistance are examples of that practice. Such organizations may be effective partners to mobilize civil society participation in various sector programmes and may be potentially effective in advocacy roles, in cooperation with national, regional and international institutions, as well as with independent experts. Several States and agencies and programmes of the United Nations have highlighted the importance of ensuring the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities in all programming, a group often marginalized even within the disability community itself.

Data collection

17. The current lack of statistical data regarding persons with disabilities creates difficulties in effectively and accurately planning programmes and creating policies. Options to increase the sources and quality of data on disability include the addition of questions to national census questionnaires, the creation of more detailed subnational surveys and the provision of training for statisticians on disability-related data collection.

18. In the following review, reference will be made to the countries that have provided specific examples of Millennium Development Goal initiatives that pertain to persons with disabilities.

A. Integrating disability into Goal 1: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger

19. Persons with disabilities experience higher rates of poverty than do persons without disabilities. In order to begin to reverse this trend, both Costa Rica and Hungary emphasized ensuring full access to and participation in the open labour market. Costa Rica suggested that labour policies that concern persons with disabilities should be under the domain of the Ministry of Labour, and not addressed haphazardly by special education services. In the Philippines, the Department of

Labour and Employment implements programmes that provide training and facilitate access to capital for entrepreneurial endeavours for persons with disabilities.

20. South Africa noted that national policy frameworks can encourage increased access to the open labour market for persons with disabilities in many ways and that cooperation and implementation are possible within both the private and public sectors.

21. Various measures exist by which the workplace can be made more inclusive. Development of mandatory workplace safety procedures and policies for all places of employment may be a cost-effective way of reducing the incidence of workplace injuries. Employment policies that encourage or mandate employers to provide reasonable accommodation for all workers may also lead to low-cost solutions that open the workplace to persons with disabilities.

22. Social support services, safety nets and subsidies are additional options for the promotion of an inclusive employment environment. Institution of those measures may encourage independence and integration in the community for persons with disabilities without fostering dependence on the State. In Tunisia, the level of tax paid by employers for their employees with disabilities is reduced as a form of incentive. Mandatory preferential or affirmative action quotas for the public and/or private sector are in place in a number of States, as another option to stimulate the employment of persons with disabilities. Support provided for caregivers of persons with disabilities can allow caregivers the time to continue working in paid employment and thus provide increased financial stability for the family unit.

23. Appropriate professional and vocational training can be utilized to create a closer match between the human resource requirements of industry and the skills of workers with disabilities, particularly for higher-growth sectors of the economy. In Azerbaijan, extensive testing is used to measure and match the abilities of job seekers with disabilities with appropriate vacancies, and national legislation guarantees free vocational training and retraining to job seekers with disabilities.

24. Innovative economic and entrepreneurial opportunities could benefit national economic growth as well as individual household wealth. Telecommuting and e-commerce opportunities via the Internet may offer more flexible and accessible methods of income generation for persons both with and without disabilities. Bangladesh and Portugal, among others, support microcredit programmes targeted at persons with disabilities. Microcredit schemes may provide important sources of income generation, in particular for those persons who are part of the informal economy. Though such schemes are often present within development initiatives, persons with disabilities are regularly excluded from participation. Business opportunities that support the needs of persons with disabilities may be especially beneficial, including, for example, projects that encourage the manufacture and distribution of assistive devices and those that increase the accessibility of a community.

25. The International Labour Organization is a potential source of information on initiatives that encourage the full labour-market participation of persons with disabilities. In Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, ILO field-tested training and information packages for private-sector businesses to assist them in their efforts to hire employees with disabilities. In Sri Lanka, an online national clearinghouse was

developed that provides referrals for jobs and training, information, advice and career guidance for job seekers. The inclusion of persons with disabilities in that database was promoted via radio campaigns. ILO also has supported the promotion of participation of persons with disabilities in the informal economy by means of training in relevant sectors, such as handicrafts and music, in Cambodia, Mongolia, Thailand and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

26. An estimated 160 million rural poor have disabilities, most of them farmers who are responsible for the food security of their households. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has expertise in responding to the needs of that population, including projects such as the following: income generation and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in agricultural-related sectors; the adaptation of agricultural production technologies to meet the requirements of workers with disabilities; the fostering of accident prevention in agricultural and forestry industries; and the elimination of nutrition-related disabilities through improved dietary practices and food security interventions. FAO also supports projects aimed at policy formulation and awareness-building. It further supports the promotion of self-help rural livelihood opportunities for persons with disabilities, building individuals' self-esteem as rural entrepreneurs. An online database on the rural disabled is also maintained by FAO and may serve as a useful resource.

27. There is wide recognition that persons with disabilities experience a particularly high level of food insecurity in emergency contexts. Inclusive emergency response and post-emergency programming would contain mechanisms that take into account the existence and needs of persons with disabilities. Ireland, among other States, supports programmes to remove landmines, which often prevent arable land from being cultivated long after conflicts have ceased.

B. Integrating disability into Goal 2: achieving universal primary education

28. An estimated 98 per cent of children with disabilities worldwide do not attend school. Educational facilities are often inaccessible, and teachers may lack the training to provide appropriate education for their students with disabilities. Those conditions often result in the exclusion of children and youth with disabilities from education. A basic starting point for universal primary education would be to ensure that all educational facilities, physical and Internet-based, are made accessible. Costa Rica and Saudi Arabia suggested that efforts be directed towards the implementation of mandatory elementary education systems in which all children with disabilities are included and integrated. Tunisia noted the importance of providing early preschool education to children with disabilities in order to increase their chances of success once they enter regular school. Through a project in the Philippines entitled "Continuing Education without Barriers", day-care centres in a number of regions are being equipped with special facilities in order to include children with disabilities. In Qatar, the Ministry of Education has a long history of training and educating persons with disabilities, with the goal of promoting their social and economic integration. The Ministry also advocates the importance of ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to education. Legislation in Qatar supports persons with disabilities, and the number of students with disabilities in the regular school system is increasing.

29. Social inclusion is an important factor in ensuring that persons with disabilities are integrated as members of the community. This integration is particularly relevant within the context of school-age-children, when individuals' sense of self-esteem and self-worth is largely formed. Programmes have been implemented that familiarize children with the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities and encourage the integration of children with disabilities within regular classrooms.

30. Flexible and innovative approaches to education may be required to reach children with disabilities, such as access to educational institutions and opportunities via the Internet or radio. Tunisia has experience with such distance education and offers educational opportunities through the "Virtual School", a project targeted at, among others, persons with disabilities with reduced mobility. Tunisia also supports the use of computer programmes and computer touch screens to aid the learning process of persons with motor, intellectual and sensory disabilities, with the aim of full inclusion of such persons within the educational system. In emergency contexts, UNHCR has sponsored teacher training to facilitate the integration of children with disabilities into regular schools within refugee camps.

31. Transport to educational facilities often poses a major barrier for children with disabilities, and many countries, including Tunisia, provide support for certain transportation services to educational facilities.

32. Educational systems may benefit from national education policy that includes budgetary support along with clear guidelines on how children with disabilities will be provided the support they require in order to function within the educational system and how the educational system will be adapted to meet those requirements. A recent report by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education provided a framework for promoting inclusive education as a human right for persons with disabilities (see A/HRC/4/29).

33. UNICEF has served as source of information on educational policy, and actively promotes policy changes in the following areas: awareness-raising in schools and communities on the rights of children with disabilities to education; improving school accessibility; training parents, teachers and community workers to assess a child's needs and to plan support accordingly; building teachers' competence to teach children with varying needs and capacities; promoting the introduction of flexible curricula; and supporting the expansion of early learning programmes and preschools that meet the needs of children with disabilities.

34. Within university systems, curricula can be adapted for all relevant professions to ensure that graduates have the skills and awareness to competently include persons with disabilities within their area of expertise. In Croatia, for example, university curricula now include lectures about children with disabilities in the undergraduate studies of teachers and psychologists. Several other institutions of higher learning are training professionals to work with children and adults with disabilities. The Government of Croatia also provided financial support to non-governmental organizations to conduct advanced training of teachers and other experts for working with children with disabilities.

C. Integrating disability into Goal 3: promoting gender equity and empowering women

35. South Africa includes women with disabilities in its economic empowerment projects for women and offers special additions to housing grants for persons with disabilities, including single women with dependants. However, the representation of women in important decision-making bodies lags far behind that of men in most countries, and women with disabilities are almost absent.

D. Integrating disability into Goal 4: reducing child mortality

36. The reduction of child mortality is a goal of particular relevance to persons with disabilities, especially in societies where infants born with disabilities may be killed or where children with disabilities are ignored and hidden by families and therefore not given proper health care or opportunities to exercise outdoors.

37. The provision of quality primary health-care services is of great importance in reducing child mortality; many Member States offer such services free of charge.

E. Integrating disability into Goal 5: improving maternal health

38. The improvement of maternal health could help prevent certain disabilities, and the special health concerns of pregnant and lactating women with various types of disabilities is an area largely ignored within the medical and development community. Additionally, in many societies there exist taboos and widespread prejudice against persons with disabilities exercising and enjoying their right to marry and found a family.

39. Among others, South Africa and Tunisia provide free care to qualifying persons with disabilities, including mothers with disabilities. Bangladesh is working towards introducing appropriate infrastructure in hospitals to ensure that persons with disabilities can fully benefit from the services provided.

40. The provision of appropriate assistive devices can allow for the highest level of independence possible for persons with disabilities.

F. Integrating disability into Goal 6: combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

41. The socio-economic toll caused by HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases is shared by persons with disabilities. However, large gaps remain in the provision of information on prevention and on health-care education in accessible formats. The Secretariat of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities has launched the Africa Campaign on Disability and HIV/AIDS, which aims to fill some of the gaps that exist in this important area.

42. South Africa has mainstreamed disability into the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), with the hope that persons with HIV/AIDS who develop disabilities as a result can receive appropriate recognition of their need for support

services, that HIV/AIDS programmes reach persons with disabilities and that HIV/AIDS statistics include information on persons with disabilities.

G. Integrating disability into Goal 7: ensuring environmental sustainability

43. Questions of environmental sustainability may be particularly relevant for persons with disabilities, who tend to be among the most vulnerable and who have little flexibility to absorb change. Persons with disabilities living in poverty may not be able to benefit from available sources of safe drinking water owing to a lack of physical access to water sources. In the context of urban slums, persons with disabilities may experience multiple accessibility obstacles within the built and natural environment.

44. Denmark recognized that improving access to and use of the domestic water cycle could assist in restoring the social integration and dignity of persons with disabilities. Improved access could reduce the burden of personal care placed on family members and release valuable time, enabling persons with disabilities and their families to apply more effort to improving income and reducing poverty. The building of accessible public and private latrines in rural and urban environments is an important element of improved sanitation and personal independence.

H. Integrating disability into Goal 8: developing a global partnership for development

45. Persons with disabilities have been glaringly absent from many initiatives of the growing global partnership for development, and little data exists on the links between development and disability or the situation of persons with disabilities vis-à-vis the Millennium Development Goals. One example of such a partnership is between the Philippines, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, which has resulted in programmes for persons with disabilities and the extension of loans for related programmes. The Philippines recommended more direct links and networks between Member States and the United Nations regional commissions' work on development. It is necessary to begin filling the gaps that exist in Millennium Development Goal initiatives with respect to disability. Within the context of global partnerships, Hungary highlighted the need to support civil society organizations in their lobbying activities and in their efforts at improving the status of persons with disabilities.

Actions at the regional level

46. Regional cooperation and plans of action may be beneficial to efforts to maximize resources and profit from shared knowledge and experience. The presence of national disability focal point offices in individual countries may facilitate such cooperation and communication. Regional cooperation may take many forms, such as the creation of regional secretariats for disability; regional initiatives for celebration of the International Day of Disabled Persons; gathering statistical data, which may be more financially feasible with shared human and capital resources; the development and creation of training and awareness programmes with regional specificity; and study tours and conferences to share experience and knowledge.

47. Several regions are implementing decades of persons with disabilities. The decades can provide useful guidance and expertise in the formulation of national action plans, especially through the sharing of good practices and the promotion of dialogue at the subregional and regional levels. The African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2000-2009, has been active in creating national decade steering committees with the task of implementing the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities. The Arab Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, focuses on 10 objectives: education; health; legislation; rehabilitation and employment; the disabled woman; the disabled child; accessibility and transport; globalization, poverty and disability; information and awareness; and recreation and sports. The second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, has organized a series of events which build on the Biwako millennium framework for action towards an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, an action plan from 2002 highlighting the links between poverty and disability. The most recently adopted decade, the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, was adopted for the period 2006-2016 and includes an agreed action plan for implementation.

IV. Options to improve complementarity and synergy in implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and other United Nations disability mechanisms

48. With the recent adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there are now three major United Nations disability instruments (the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). Therefore, there is a need to improve synergy, reduce duplication and maximize judicious and efficient use of resources among the mechanisms.

49. Presently, each of the three disability instruments has different reporting lines to document progress on implementation. This may lead to a waste of resources of both Member States and the United Nations in reporting on disability-related activities, and could contribute to the lack of a centralized source for related information. Furthermore, determining which disability-related activities should be attributed to a particular disability instrument is often an arbitrary distinction, particularly as all three instruments call upon Governments to adhere to many of the same general principles.

50. As part of the preparation of the present report, Member States were asked to provide their views on how to increase the synergy and complementarity of the World Programme of Action with the other United Nations disability mechanisms. Their suggestions acknowledged the historical importance of all instruments and offered solutions to increase synergy at both the national and international levels.

51. Spain suggested that, as a first step towards synergizing the three disability instruments, the United Nations Secretariat could prepare a non-paper that

highlighted the complementarities among the instruments. That document would then serve as a basis to inform future steps.

52. The Philippines noted that it might be helpful for the United Nations to provide the impetus and guidance on ways to harmonize the implementation of the three instruments, with a view to ensuring that the comparative advantage and value of each instrument would be harnessed.

53. Costa Rica stated that, as many of the points within the World Programme of Action are still relevant today, the World Programme of Action could be updated using the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a basis.

54. There remains an outstanding issue regarding the proposed supplement to the Standard Rules, as described above in paragraph 5. The proposed supplement could be addressed as part of efforts to improve complementarity between instruments.

55. Finland stated that from the perspective of the Member States, one single monitoring and reporting mechanism for all disability instruments is preferable. Finland also suggested that National Action Programmes on disability could be developed that include the guidance provided by all United Nations disability instruments but focus explicitly on implementation of the articles of the Convention.

56. Finland noted that the role of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission for Social Development on disability could be expanded to include raising awareness of the Convention and assistance to Member States on its implementation.

57. Costa Rica stated that the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities could be made responsible for monitoring the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, in addition to the Convention. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should clearly establish the format of country reports, in particular, defining indicators to be measured, to facilitate the ease of reporting for countries.

58. Finland noted that the Standard Rules should be evaluated to determine whether they are still required. If they are deemed necessary, they should be revised to serve as a supplement to the Convention.

59. With respect to the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability, the Syrian Arab Republic noted the importance of using the Fund's resources to support activities from civil society organizations in the least developed and developing countries, while the Philippines highlighted the potential of using the Fund to assist countries in fulfilling their commitments under the World Programme of Action.

V. Recommendations and conclusions

60. **The recent adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities represents a crucial opportunity to consolidate disability-related activities within the United Nations system. A first step towards that consolidation may be the examination of options to improve the complementarity and synergy of the three main disability instruments. Expedient decisions would reduce the inefficient use of resources available to achieve the goals espoused in the three instruments. The General Assembly may wish to make this issue a priority to be considered during its sixty-third session.**

61. **A possible solution to streamlining the reporting mechanisms is to consolidate the reporting into one comprehensive, issue-based report on disability and development, rather than the current instrument-based reporting system. Such a report could focus on the progress of integration and inclusion of disability in development efforts, and could include the spirit and tenets of all three United Nations disability instruments, with an explicit focus on the Convention, owing to its legally binding nature. The role of the Special Rapporteur might then be re-examined, and could be redefined to include all disability-related actions, with a focus on implementation of the Convention.**

62. **The United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability is currently functioning under a mandate that dates from 1981. In view of the adoption of the Convention and given the need of a more unified approach among the United Nations disability instruments, a review and update of its mandate could enable the Fund to be more responsive to present day realities. The review and update could be addressed as part of efforts to improve complementarity between instruments.**

63. **The three United Nations disability instruments reflect the evolution of language and thought surrounding disability issues, and the nomenclature used in the Convention represents currently accepted practices. The term "persons with disabilities", which places the emphasis on the person, is now widely considered preferable to "disabled persons". The General Assembly may wish to consider promoting the harmonization and updating of language used for disability within the United Nations system. The updating of the term should include the event currently entitled "International Day of Disabled Persons".**

64. **The major disability instruments represent Member States' strong commitment to promoting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities in the context of development. Differences in emphasis and approach exist, but the basic commitment is widespread. Significant progress towards the goal of fully inclusive societies is attainable with strong political will and States' commitment, working in cooperation with the United Nations system and civil society. There is a growing body of experience from which to draw guidance on concrete measures to integrate disability into efforts to realize the Millennium Development Goals. The General Assembly may wish to encourage Member States to make the integration of disability a fundamental principle of existing and future development assistance programmes.**